



Innovation Plan

Pathways Early College Innovation School

Overview

The Pathways Early College Innovation School represents an evolution of the current partnership between the Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District and Mount Wachusett Community College, a partnership which has been growing since Mahar became a K-12 partner with MWCC's Gateway to College (GtC) program. Maintaining a proactive approach to student support, Mahar is expanding the partnership with MWCC by introducing Pathways, an Early College Innovation High School, which is based on the Early College High School initiative (ECHSI) and has been increasing in popularity since 2002 when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and 13 other intermediaries began it. This initiative now counts over 200 schools nationwide (Seltzer, 2010), and operates under several guiding core principles:

"Early Colleges:

- Are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education;
- Are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success;
- Jointly develop an integrated academic program with their higher education partners so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credit leading to college completion; and
- Work with initiative partners to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement. (Nodine, 2009)"

These principles support the theory that earning college credit while in high school will help students gain confidence in their academic potential, and will also improve their transition to a college campus, as well as their retention through attainment of a college degree (Hoffman &

Vargas, 2008). The ECHS model, based on academic rigor and relevance, combines the opportunity to experience college, save time and money, and simultaneously graduate with a high school diploma and significant college credits. The fusion of wrap-around academic support and free college credits, earned in the adult environment of a college campus, is a powerful incentive for motivated students who are eager for the intellectual challenges an early college high school will provide. Additionally, ECHS-based Pathways will prepare all students for lifelong learning in the areas of academics, civic engagement and social responsibility. Outcomes for graduates of MWCC and Pathways will include: the ability to effectively access, analyze, utilize and communicate information through diverse means. Students will also demonstrate respect and responsible membership in society, express emotions appropriately and practice intelligent decision making. These are all necessary as they progress toward simultaneously earning their high school diplomas and college credits toward an associate degree or certificate.

Service Provisions

The Pathways Early College Innovation School will be an expansion of the existing K-12-Community College partnership between Ralph C. Mahar Regional School, located in Orange, MA, and Mount Wachusett Community College located in Gardner, MA. All first semester cohort courses offered through Pathways will be on location at MWCC, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. In Fall 2010, Pathways will begin serving a cohort of twenty (20) Grade 11 students, and each subsequent fall twenty (20) new Grade 11 students will enroll. The desired maximum enrollment of forty (40) students will be reached during the second year of operation, and will continue at that level. Following a multi-phased summer advertising campaign (local media, cable access, and information sessions), student selection will be on a first come, first served basis. Student eligibility criteria will include: reside in a Massachusetts school district, be at least 16 years of age *and* entering Grade 11 by the start of the fall semester, be recommended by the sending school, and complete the Pathways application.

Students who have not yet passed the MCAS will be scheduled to take the appropriate test(s) at MWCC.

The objective of Pathways is to provide an early college experience to Grade 11 students under the dual enrollment model, in which students graduate with a high school diploma and significant credits toward an Associate's Degree or a Certificate. Students will take four core courses per semester, and the college credits earned will also apply toward their high school diploma requirements. During the first semester, all students will take foundation Reading, Writing, Math, and First Year Seminar to help them solidify their academic skills for college-level coursework. During their second semester, students will take a Career Portfolio and Design course to help them decide on a career pathway, in addition to courses which satisfy both Associate degree and high school diploma requirements. Further professional training will include a summer internship program between junior and senior year, intended to aid in the development of the job skills and soft skills necessary for employment. During students' senior year, they will enroll in associate degree pathway courses that will apply toward the requirements of their intended major. Wraparound support services for all students include unlimited access to tutoring and academic support services, personal counseling, and academic advising. All Pathways students will be considered Mount Wachusett Community College students and will have access to all MWCC services, included counseling, advising, career services, fitness center, and leadership activities offered by Student Life.

Ultimately, the purpose of Pathways is two-fold: to address the needs of motivated students who would like to enroll in college courses prior to high school graduation, and to boost enrollment and retention of diverse student populations, including those who otherwise would not persist in college due to socio-economic factors. The necessity of this approach is self-evident upon examination of the relationship between educational attainment and income. Individuals earning a Bachelor's degree will earn 75% more annually than those without (Nodine, 2009). Many students, including nearly 35% of low income students, do not even complete high school, which puts them at an even further disadvantage, especially when

compared with the 91% of middle and upper income students who earn a diploma. Also, middle and upper income students are five times as likely as their low-income peers to earn a two- or four-year degree (Nodine, 2009).

Locally, in Massachusetts the picture is just as dismal. Each year approximately 10,000 students drop out of high school before receiving a diploma (Executive Office of Education, 2009). These students are less likely to have a job and medical insurance and more likely to rely on public assistance to help them meet their basic needs (Executive Office of Education, 2009). Massachusetts leaders are also looking at college completion rates: graduation rates of students from public two-year colleges within 150% of time (three years) hovered at 16% in 2007, while public four-year rates are somewhat better at 54%, but still disappointing (Massachusetts Alliance of States). Local MWCC data is comparable, with 18% of students from the 2006 cohort graduating in 150% of time, while 22% from the same cohort transferred to another institution prior to earning a degree or certificate. (MWCC, 2010.)

Pathways will address enrollment and persistence issues in the student populations served, and additionally, it will assist students in earning the necessary credentials to succeed in their chosen career path.

Governance

The ECHS models themselves have demonstrated success and are the reason the movement is now gaining momentum on state and national levels. The Early College High School Initiative enrolls students who are traditionally from underserved populations. The four-year graduation rate from this network in 2008 was approximately 92%, while 96% of their graduates enrolled in either a two- or four-year institution after receiving their high school diplomas (Nodine, 2009). Most of these schools exist in partnerships between local colleges and school districts, many times using existing space, faculty and curriculum while developing innovative ideas within their communities (Nodine, 2009).

Over 41,972 students from 24 states and over 200 schools take part in the Early College High School Initiative (this includes the 27 schools cited below by Gateway to College, another partner in the Early College High School Initiative with a distinct model and its own network within the larger initiative) (Nodine, 2009). The success of these models with students typically underrepresented in higher education is also compelling: 74% of those enrolled are students of color, and almost 60% are from low-income backgrounds while 38% are Latino students (Nodine, 2009).

Nationally, students in the similar Gateway to College program pass 78% of all of their courses, the average attendance rate is 87% and students entering GtC receive high school diplomas at a rate 2-3 times higher than U.S. students that have dropped out at least once (Gateway to College National Network, 2010). Locally at MWCC, 90% of the 78 graduates from GtC plan on continuing in college past their high school diploma. (MWCC, 2010.) This is especially powerful when you look at the statistics of its students. The average high school grade point average of MWCC GtC students upon entering the program was 1.9 out of a possible 4.0 and 46% of students are from families who have never attended college, while 16% have at least one parent who does not have a high school diploma. (MWCC, 2010.) Autonomy and flexibility play a large role in the success of the ECHS models. Many students, though bright and motivated, have issues that prevent them from benefiting from a one-size-fits-all education. Flexibility is practically a requirement for their success.

Under the current MWCC-Mahar partnership agreement with the Gateway to College, Dual Enrollment and Middle College programs, issues of autonomy and flexibility have been previously addressed. Existing flexibility includes utilizing Mahar faculty as MWCC contract instructors, applying MWCC credits toward a Mahar diploma, and for Gateway students, the revision of credit requirements and the allowance of an MWCC Career Research, Development and Portfolio Design course to substitute for a 35-credit hour school to career requirement. This course introduces career planning as a lifelong process of incorporating an individual's

multi-faceted roles within an ever-changing society. Opportunities will be provided to explore and identify individual interests, attitudes, values, and skills. Emphasis will be placed on job market strategies, career networking, interviewing, résumé writing, cover letters, and professional communication. Students will complete their personal portfolio as well as a presentation portfolio.

The process to involve stakeholders in the development of the Pathways Innovation Plan will include a presentation of the Innovation Plan to the Mahar School Committee on June 29, 2010 and coordination with the teacher's union to further define and develop teacher roles within the Middle College/Dual Enrollment model.

Staffing

Initial staffing will include one director who will be 25% funded through the Innovation School, and one part-time Resource Specialist, both based out of MWCC, who will manage the student caseload and teach two of the Pathways core curriculum courses: First Year Seminar and Career Research, Development and Portfolio Design, both of which are three-credit MWCC courses designed to equip students with sound academic skill sets and a career path knowledge base for continuous lifelong learning.

Funding

Funding will be in accordance with the MGL Chapter 70 formula of per pupil allotment, based on DESE and individual municipality formulas. The Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District agrees to allocate 80% of funding per student to Mount Wachusett Community College. Students from other districts wishing to enroll in Pathways will school choice to Mahar; the school choice funding formula will follow the student. Allocated funds will pay for college tuition for all students, textbooks for low-income students, and one split-funded director and part-time Resource Specialist.

Future Growth and Replication

Locally, Mount Wachusett Community College is home to a Gateway to College site, the first in New England and the 7th awarded out of the now 27 national sites (Gateway to College National Network, 2010). Data submitted to the GtC network from 2009 suggests local success as well. Of students who complete the first semester of the program, 84% graduate, while of all entering students, 71% graduate (MWCC Data, 2010).

Replication of this model to another target population, high achieving students, will happen at MWCC in the fall of 2010 with the opening of the Pathways Early College Innovation School, part of Governor Patrick's Innovation (formerly Readiness) school initiative launched in 2009 (Chipkin, 2009).

Initial interest in the program is anticipated from the current Mahar student population entering Grade 11 in September 2010. As the program's partnership model expands to more students, interest is anticipated from outlying districts, including Leominster, Fitchburg, Gardner, Winchendon, and Athol. Further interest is anticipated from Littleton, Lunenburg, and Wachusett Regional School Districts. This projection is based on data gleaned from the student population enrolled in the MWCC-Mahar Gateway to College program, a similar model which serves students at risk of dropping out of high school. In order to provide the services of Pathways to the Central and Western Mass. regions and to maintain financial viability with school choice revenue, the enrollment from the Mahar student body will be capped at 20% of the total enrollment, leaving the remaining 80% of the enrollment to school choice districts. When Pathways is seen as a successful Early College High School model, it is anticipated that neighboring institutions will want to provide the same type of opportunity to populations within their service areas.

The current partners are MWCC and the Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District. This partnership continues to expand from its original roots within the Gateway to College program. The resources, expertise, and capacity which each partner will contribute toward Pathways have already been successfully demonstrated with GtC, where over 70 students have earned a high school diploma through the program. The collaboration, flexibility, and autonomy which exists within this partnership will help to identify and serve students through an early college high school at MWCC, using existing MWCC staff to serve in both a teaching and student advising capacity to host a cohort of students and help them transition to an early college setting. The populations to be served are located within the MWCC service area, and the Mahar-specific students typically reside in an area that is centrally located between Mount Wachusett Community College and Greenfield Community College. As Pathways grows, the potential to include Greenfield Community College and four-year institutions such as UMASS-Amherst and Fitchburg State College are viable options for future replication and four-year degree pathway continuation.

Pathways Early College Innovation School Annual Budget

Item	FTE	Salary
Director	25%	\$14,750
Resource Specialist	50%	\$25,000
Total Salaries		\$39,750
Fringe incl medicare @ 35.03%		\$13,924
Health & Welfare		\$507
Total Personnel:		\$54,181
<u>Supplies:</u>		
Office		\$ 2,000
<u>Equipment:</u>		
Computers		\$0
Printers		
<u>Transportation:</u>		
Student		\$ -
Staff Travel		\$ 2,800
Out of State		\$ 3,000
Annual Peer Learning Conference		\$ 2,000
<u>Contractual:</u>		
faculty \$3500 per course		\$ 10,500
Tuition	20 x 4 x 600	\$ 48,000
<u>Other:</u>		
Printing		\$ 200
Advertising		\$ 4,000
Postage		\$ 1,319
Misc.		
Indirect		\$ -
Total Other Expenses		\$73,819
Grand Total Expenses		\$128,000
Revenue from Mahar @ \$4000 per student*		\$80,000
Loss to MWCC		-\$48,000
Less tuition to MWCC		\$48,000
loss for MWCC		\$0

*Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District to receive approximately \$15,000.00 for administrative duties

*Planning funding may be available from Executive Office of Education

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